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The Alexander Legend in Central Asia¹

by JOHN ANDREW BOYLE

SINCE the death of Alexander the Great in 323 B.C. there has been no age in history, whether in the West or in the East, in which his name and exploits have not been familiar. And yet not only have all contemporary records been lost but even the work based on those records though written some four and a half centuries after his death, the *Anabasis* of Arrian, was totally unknown to the writers of the Middle Ages and became available to Western scholarship only with the Revival of Learning.² The perpetuation of Alexander's fame through so many ages and amongst so many peoples is due in the main to the innumerable recensions and transmogrifications of a work known as the Alexander Romance or Pseudo-Callisthenes.³ There have been many theories regarding the date and sources of this curious work. According to the most recent authority, Merkelbach, it was compiled by a Greco-Egyptian writing in Alexandria about A.D. 300. The sources on which the anonymous author drew were twofold. On the one hand he made use of 'a romanticized history of Alexander of a highly rhetorical type depending on the Cleitarchus tradition',⁴ and with this he amalgamated a collection of imaginary letters derived from an *Epistolary Romance of Alexander* written in the first century B.C. He also included two long letters from Alexander to his mother Olympias and his tutor Aristotle describing his marvellous adventures in India and at the end of the World. These are, as Merkelbach says, the literary expression of a living popular tradition and as such are the most remarkable and interesting part of the work.⁵

Two Latin translations were made of the Greek text of the Alexander Romance: one by Julius Valerius in the beginning of the fourth and one by Leo of Naples in the tenth century; and these two versions are the main sources of what was written about Alexander in medieval Europe.⁶ In Asia the development of the Romance was profoundly affected by the so-called *Christian Legend*

concerning Alexander, an apocalyptic work which does not appear to have been known in the West, and of which the Syriac text was discovered and published only in comparatively recent times.⁷ It is found at the end of the manuscripts of a Syriac version of the Romance made not much later than the seventh century from a lost Pahlavi (Middle Persian) text.⁸ The contents of the *Legend* are summarized in a brief introductory heading:

An exploit by Alexander, the son of Philip the Macedonian, showing how he went forth to the ends of the world, and made a gate of iron, and shut it in the face of the north wind, that the Huns might not come forth to spoil the countries: from the manuscripts in the house of the archives of the Kings of Alexandria.⁹

He apparently journeys first to the West to the shores of the fetid sea that surrounds the earth and then to the East. And here I quote the text *in extenso*:

So the whole camp mounted, and Alexander and his troops went up between the foetid sea and the bright sea to the place where the sun enters the window of heaven; for the sun is the servant of the Lord, and neither by night nor by day does he cease from his travelling. The place of his rising is over the sea, and the people who dwell there, when he is about to rise, flee away and hide themselves in the sea, that they may not be burnt by his rays; and he passes through the midst of the heavens to the place where he enters the window of heaven; and wherever he passes there are terrible mountains, and those who dwell there have caves hollowed out in the rocks, and as soon as they see the sun passing (over them), men and birds flee away from before him and hide in the caves, for rocks are rent by his blazing heat and fall down, and whether they be men or beasts, as soon as the stones touch them they are consumed. And when the sun enters the window of heaven, he straightway bows down and makes obeisance before God his Creator; and he travels and descends the whole night through the heavens, until at length he finds himself where he rises.¹⁰

After his journeys to the East and West Alexander travels northwards through Armenia into the Caucasus. He asks the natives: 'Who are the nations within this mountain upon which we are looking?' They reply that they are the Huns and that their kings are 'Gog and Magog and Nawal the kings of the sons of Japhet . . .'.¹¹ He orders the construction of a gate of brass to close

the gap¹² in the wall of mountains and confine the nations enclosed within them.

And Alexander commanded and fetched three thousand smiths, workers in iron, and three thousand men, workers in brass. And they put down brass and iron, and kneaded it as a man kneads when he works clay. Then they brought it and made a gate, the length of which was twelve cubits and its breadth eight cubits. And he made a lower threshold from mountain to mountain, the length of which was twelve cubits; and he hammered it into the rocks of the mountains, and it was fixed in with brass and iron.¹³

Alexander then causes an inscription to be engraved upon the gate in which he prophesies the future incursions of the Huns, one of which would take place 'at the conclusion of eight hundred and twenty-six years'.¹⁴ If one reckons in accordance with the Era of Alexander, the year of this invasion by the Huns would be the year beginning 1 October, 514; and it so happens that there was an invasion of the Caucasus area by the Hunnish people known as the Sabir during that very year — a clear indication of the time when the *Legend* was invented.¹⁵

The gate constructed, Alexander is involved in hostilities with Tubarlaq, King of Persia, the ruler of all this region to the south of the Caucasus, who is defeated and becomes Alexander's tributary. A force consisting of an equal number of Romans (for Alexander is regarded as a Roman) and Persians is left to guard the gate against the Huns and Alexander leaves Persia. On his return journey he visits Jerusalem and then takes ship for Alexandria, where he dies, bequeathing his silver throne to Christ.¹⁶

There is also a metrical version of the *Christian Legend* by the Syrian poet Jacob of Sarūgh, who died in 521.¹⁷ It follows the prose text fairly closely, but refers to the Huns simply as Gog and Magog and interpolates from the Alexander Romance the story of the visit to the Land of Darkness.¹⁸ In this form the *Legend* was afterward incorporated in its totality into an Arabic version of the Romance that is now lost but of which an Ethiopian translation is extant.¹⁹ From that and later Arabic versions of the Alexander Romance have sprung the versions in the different Islamic languages from Ottoman to Malay.²⁰ But long before the appearance of these Arabic versions the *Christian Legend concerning Alexander* had

found its way into Arabia and, transmitted by Nestorian missionaries, had been absorbed into the traditions of the Turkish and Mongol peoples of North Eastern Asia.

In the Koran we read how Dhu'l-Qarnain — the Two-horned,²¹ i.e. Alexander — followed a route,

until when he reached the setting of the sun, he found it to set in a miry fount. . . . Then followed he a route, until when he reached the rising of the sun he found it to rise on a people to whom we had given no shelter from it. . . . Then followed he a route until he came between the two mountains, beneath which he found a people who scarce understood a language. They said, 'O Dhoulkarnain, verily Gog and Magog waste this land; shall we then pay thee tribute, so thou build a rampart between us and them?' He said, 'Better than your tribute is the might wherewith my Lord hath strengthened me; but help me strenuously, and I will set a barrier between you and them. Bring me blocks of iron' — until when it filled the space between the mountain sides — 'Ply,' said he, 'your bellows' — until when he had made it red with heat, he said, — 'Bring me molten brass that I may pour upon it.' And Gog and Magog were not able to scale it, neither were they able to dig through it. . . .²²

The story of the land of the rising sun was incorporated in a Turkish legend about the origin of the 'rain-stone' recounted by the thirteenth-century geographer Yāqūt on the authority of one Abu'l-'Abbās 'Īsā b. Muḥammad al-Marwazī, who lived in the time of the Sāmānid ruler Īsmā'il ibn Aḥmad (892-907).

[An Oghuz] prince told Abu'l-'Abbās's informant how one of his ancestors, having quarrelled with his father, journeyed eastwards until he came to a land of which he was told by its inhabitants that it was impossible to pass beyond it, the way being barred by a mountain. 'The sun,' they said, 'rises behind this mountain, and it is very near the earth and falls upon nothing without burning it.' The prince's ancestor asked: 'Are there any people or animals there?' 'Yes,' they replied. He asked: 'How can they live there in the conditions which you have described?' They replied: 'As for the people, they have passages under the ground and caves in the mountains, and when the sun rises they go into them and stay there until the sun has moved away from them, and then they come out. As for the animals, they pick up stones of which they have inspired knowledge, and each animal takes a stone in its mouth and raises its head towards the heavens and casts a shadow over them, and a cloud then appears and forms a screen between the animals

and the sun.' The Turkish prince's ancestor entered that country and found it to be exactly as he had been told. He and his companions attacked the animals, collected the stones and took as many as they could carry back to their own country, where they had been ever since and where they were used for the producing of rain and snow.²³

In the popular traditions recounted by John de Plano Carpini, the ambassador of Innocent IV to the Mongols, in his *Ystoria Mongalorum*²⁴ 'the land of the rising sun' is one of the countries invaded by Genghis Khan. The name of the country is given only in the more detailed narrative recently edited by George D. Painter under the title of 'The Tartar Relation', and contained in the same volume with the so-called Vinland Map:

Chingis fled in terror with his army, and leaving the mountains [i.e. the Caspian range] on the right marched north east. At last after toiling continuously on the journey for three more months through the desert, he ordered them, as food was running short, to eat one man in every ten. After these three months he came to great mountains in a country called Narayrgen, that is, Men of the Sun, for Nara is Tartar for sun, and Irgen means men. Finding trodden trackways but no inhabitants, he and his men began to marvel exceedingly. Soon after he found a single native with his wife, and proceeded to ask him through numerous interpreters where the men of the country were. He learned that they dwelt in underground homes beneath the mountains, and sent the captured man, keeping the woman still prisoner, to ask if they were willing to come out and fight. While the man was on his way back day broke, and the Tartars threw themselves face downward on the ground at the noise of the rising sun, and many of them died on the spot. The natives of the country saw the enemy and made a night attack on them, killing a number of the Tartars, and seeing this Chingis Khan fled with the survivors, but took the captive wife with him nevertheless.

As the Tartars themselves told the friars, she stayed with them for a long time after, and asserted without a shadow of doubt that the aforesaid country is situated at the very end of the world and beyond it no land is found, but only the ocean sea. Wherefore, owing to the excessive proximity of the sun when it rises over the sea at the point of summer sunrise, a crashing and roaring of such a nature and magnitude is heard there, due to the opposition of the sun and firmament, that no one dares to live in the open air on the surface until the sun proceeds through its zodiac to the south, for fear of dying instantly or being wounded as if struck by lightning. For this reason the natives beat huge drums and other instruments in their mountain caves, in order to shut

the noise of the sun with the sound of their drumming. This country is flat and fertile after the mountains are crossed, but not large.²⁵

It will be noted that in this version of the story, long familiar from Carpini's briefer account, it is specifically stated that it is derived from Mongol informants, and this is confirmed by the Mongol name — Narayrgen 'People of the Sun' — given to the land of the rising sun. Some scholars have seen in Narayrgen the Mongolian equivalent of the Sino-Japanese name for Japan — Jih-pên kuo, 'country of the source of the sun'.²⁶ Such an interpretation is plausible only if the story told by Carpini — and now available in this fuller version — is considered in isolation as being purely Mongolian in origin. But clearly the 'people of the sun' are to be identified with the mythical cave-dwellers of the *Christian Legend*, the Koran and the tenth-century Turkish legend about the origin of the rain-stone. Confirmation of this is found in an apocalyptic work known as the *Revelations* of Methodius, which was composed in Syria towards the end of the reign of Constantine IV (668–685) and, translated into Latin, enjoyed an immense vogue in Europe throughout the Middle Ages and down into modern times.²⁷ In this work Alexander is said to have penetrated 'as far as the sea which is called the Land of the Sun'.²⁸ The inhabitants, whom the author confuses or identifies with the people of Gog and Magog, are referred to as the descendants of Japhet, and in an earlier part of the *Revelations* we are told that Ionitus, a son of Noah born 100 years after the Flood, was sent by his father to the East, where he reached the shores of the sea 'that is called the Land of the Sun, in which the sun rises'.²⁹ Thus the expression 'Land of the Sun' or 'People of the Sun' is at least as old as the seventh century³⁰ and was presumably incorporated in a version of the *Christian Legend* carried to the Far East by Nestorian missionaries.

We have already heard the Koranic version of how Alexander built a gate of iron and brass to close the gap in the wall of mountains that confined the nations of Gog and Magog. The story reminds one of elements in the legend about the birth, or rather re-birth, of the Mongol people. The story is told in greatest detail by the fourteenth-century Persian historian Rashīd al-Dīn.³¹ Some 2,000 years before Rashīd's time the Mongols had been all but exterminated in a war with neighbouring peoples. The sole

survivors, two men and their wives, took refuge in a fertile valley hemmed in on every side by lofty mountains and impenetrable forests: it was called Ergene Qun, i.e. 'Steep Cliff'. As time went by, the descendants of those two persons had so increased and multiplied that the valley was too small to contain them all; and they deliberated together as to the means of finding some egress into the outside world. In a certain part of the mountains there was an iron mine. Gathering great quantities of wood and charcoal they placed them at the foot of the bluff where the mine was situated. Next they slaughtered seventy head of oxen and horses and fashioned seventy pairs of bellows out of their hides. Then setting fire to the wood and charcoal they blew all seventy pairs of bellows simultaneously and, the fierce heat causing the iron ore to melt, there was formed an outlet through which they made their way down to the broad plains below.

The Ergene Qun legend, like so much else in their culture, would seem to have been borrowed by the Mongols from their Turkish predecessors. The traditions of the T'u-chüeh, as the early Turks are called by the Chinese, speak of a mountain cavern in which their first ancestor with the she-wolf, his wife, sought refuge from their enemies. Through this cavern they passed on to a grassy plain, several 100 *li* in circumference, where their descendants lived for many generations until they emerged from the cavern to settle on the southern slopes of the Altai.³²

In both these versions, in fact, we have the realization of the prophecy made in the *Legend* that in the fullness of time the people of Gog and Magog — Huns, Turks or Mongols — will burst forth from their mountain prison and overrun the outside world. The history of the names Gog and Magog is extremely curious. In Genesis³³ Magog is mentioned as one of the sons of Japhet, and the name has been taken as referring to the region south of the Caucasus corresponding to Eastern and Northern Armenia. In Ezekiel³⁴ we read how Gog, of the land of Magog, will come from his place out of the uttermost parts of the north, he and many peoples with him, 'all of them riding upon horses, a great company and a mighty army'. We hear now for the first time of Gog, and Magog has become his kingdom, but is no longer south of the Caucasus. Indeed Ezekiel's description of the invasion of Gog has been seen as an echo of the invasion of the Cimmerians, who came

southwards from the steppes through the pass of Darial towards the end of the eighth century B.C.³⁵ Finally in Revelation³⁶ Gog and Magog are represented as the nations that shall be gathered together by Satan upon his release from prison at the end of a thousand years. And so it came about that they were afterwards identified with the various nomad peoples: with the Huns in the *Christian Legend concerning Alexander*, with the Turks and with the Mongols; and the site of Alexander's gate, originally in the Central Caucasus, was constantly moved northwards and eastwards to match the changed identity of Gog and Magog.³⁷

We come now to Alexander's journey into the Land of Darkness, which, as we have seen, was transferred from the Romance to the *Christian Legend*. The Land of Darkness was not a purely mythical country; it is the name given in medieval, and perhaps in earlier times, to the sub-arctic regions of what is now the U.S.S.R. When entering it Alexander orders his followers to take with them she-asses that were suckling foals, leaving the foals behind them so that the animals might find their way back for the sake of their young ones.³⁸ The story passed into Rashīd al-Dīn's version of the Legend of Oghuz, the eponymous ancestor of the Oghuz Turks. Oghuz and his companions enter Qaranghuluq, i.e. the Land of Darkness, mounted on four mares and nine she-asses whose young ones had been tethered on the border.³⁹ The story was known to Marco Polo also. He speaks of 'a province called Darkness' far to the north of King Conchi's kingdom, i.e. the territory of the White Horde in what is now Central Kazakhstan, and tells us, as though it were a matter of sober fact, how the Tartars penetrate into this province, where 'the sun, the moon, and the stars never appear . . . , but it is always as dark as with us in the twilight'. They go there, he says, 'on mares that have foals, and these foals they leave on the confines of this land; in this way the mares return to their foals, being better able to find their way than men.'⁴⁰

The transmitters of these tales must, as has already been indicated, have been the Nestorians, who before the advent of Islam had spread the Christian faith across the whole breadth of Asia.⁴¹ The founder of this sect was Nestorius, the patriarch of Constantinople whose teachings about the two natures of Christ were condemned by the Council of Ephesus in 431. The Nestorians organized themselves into a church in Syria in 435 and afterwards

took refuge from persecution by the Orthodox Church in Persia, Mesopotamia and Arabia. Their missionaries penetrated to India, Central Asia and the Far East. The apostle St Thomas is traditionally supposed to have brought the gospel to Southern India, where there are to this day 'Syrian Christians', whose liturgy is in the Syriac language: but these are in fact the descendants of converts made by the Nestorians. Nestorian cemeteries have been discovered in what is now Soviet Central Asia. As for China, it is to much later missionaries that we owe our knowledge of the Nestorian mission. In 1625 the Jesuits discovered in Sian in Shensi province a pillar erected on 4 February, 781, on which is recorded in Syriac and Chinese the arrival of a Christian missionary at the Chinese court in 635 and the permission given by the T'ang Emperor Kau-tsung (649-83) to build Christian monasteries in a number of Chinese districts. The pillar records also the arrival of further missionaries in 744 and the holding of a synod in Sian in 779.⁴² Even in the eleventh century there were still Nestorian communities in China, but they did not survive much longer. Marco Polo, in a passage that is found in only one manuscript of his work, describes a 'race of people' living in Fukien in Southern China who professed a peculiar kind of Christianity, but it has been shown that these were in fact Manichaeans, who were very numerous in this province and did not disappear until the seventeenth century.⁴³ In Mongolia we have no certain information about Christianity until the time of Genghis Khan: then we hear of various tribes that were wholly or partly Nestorian.⁴⁴ One such tribe were the Öngüt, who inhabited the region immediately to the north of the Great Wall; one of their princes was converted to Catholicism, but afterwards reverted to Nestorianism: Marco Polo calls him Prince George and in fact his name is the Turkish equivalent of George.⁴⁵ We have however no written records of Christianity in Mongolia — i.e. the country of the early Turks — before the thirteenth century. The only evidence is to be found in the stories derived from the *Christian Legend concerning Alexander*. These stories, compiled by an unknown Syrian Nestorian in the seventh century, had been familiar to the peoples of North-Eastern Asia for so long that their Christian origin had been forgotten and they had become part and parcel of the native tradition.

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NOTES

1. This is the text of a paper read to the Folklore Society on June 12, 1974.
2. It was first translated by the humanist Pier Paolo Vergerio (1370-1444), who in a letter to the Emperor Sigismund points out Arrian's superiority over the Latin historians. See George Cary, *The Medieval Alexander* (Cambridge, 1956), pp. 238-9 and 375-7.
3. The name is a misnomer. The first editor of the Greek text so overrated one of his manuscripts, in which the work is attributed to Callisthenes, 'that he put the name *Pseudo-Callisthenes* on the title-page, and *Pseudo-Callisthenes* has remained a ghost word ever since.' See A. R. Anderson, *Alexander's Gate, Gog and Magog, and the Inclosed Nations* (Cambridge, Mass., 1932), p. 30.
4. Cary, p. 356 (in an appendix by Professor D. J. A. Ross).
5. Reinhold Merkelbach, *Die Quellen des griechischen Alexanderromans* (Munich, 1954), pp. 188-9.
6. On the principal medieval derivatives of Julius Valerius and Leo see Cary, pp. 24-58.
7. E. A. Wallis Budge (ed. and transl.), *The History of Alexander, being the Syriac Version of the Pseudo-Callisthenes* (Cambridge, 1889), pp. 144-58.
8. See Budge (transl.), *The Alexander Book in Ethiopia* (London, 1933), pp. xviii-xix; Theodor Nöldeke, 'Beiträge zur Geschichte des Alexanderromans', *Denkschriften der kaiserlichen Akademie der Wissenschaften, Philosophisch-historische Classe XXXVIII* (1890), Abhandlung V, 11-17.
9. Budge, *The History of Alexander*, p. 144.
10. *Ibid.*, p. 148. In the 'windows of heaven' we have a curious survival of the old Babylonian concept of the two gates, one in the East and one in the West, through which Shamash the Sun God passed on his daily journey across the world. See below, p. 227, note 30.
11. Budge, *The History of Alexander*, p. 150.
12. The original site of Alexander's Gate was the Darial Pass in the Central Caucasus between Tiflis and Vladikavkaz (Ordzonikidze).
13. Budge, *The History of Alexander*, p. 153. In the Ethiopian version of the Alexander Romance (on which see above p. 219 and note 17) we are told that the smiths 'took the skins of great animals and made them into bellows wherewith to blow the fire . . .'. See Budge, *The Alexander Book*, p. 142. The bellows must have figured in the original version of the Legend. Cf. the Koranic version (p. 220) and, above all, the Ergene Qun legend (pp. 222-3).
14. Budge, *The History of Alexander*, p. 154.
15. See Nöldeke, p. 31. On the incursions of the Sabir into Armenia and Asia Minor see Arthur Christensen, *L'Iran sous les Sassanides* (Copenhagen and Paris, 1936), pp. 346-7.
16. Budge, *The History of Alexander*, pp. 156-8.
17. On Jacob of Sarūgh see Nöldeke, pp. 30-2.
18. See below, p. 224.
19. See Nöldeke, p. 32. For an English translation see Budge, *The Alexander Book*, pp. 2-213.
20. See Budge, *The Alexander Book*, pp. xx-xxii.
21. In the *Christian Legend* Alexander speaks of God's having made him horns upon his head, 'wherewith I might thrust down the kingdoms of the world'. See Budge, *The History of Alexander*, p. 146; cf. p. 156, where God appears to him in a dream and says: '... I have made horns of iron to grow on thy head that thou mayest thrust down the kingdoms of the earth with them. . .'. The title 'Two-horned', according to Budge, *The Alexander Book*, p. 25, note 1, 'is probably of ancient Egyptian origin. . . . Alexander adopted the title because it was applied to the God Ammon (Amen-Rā) of Liby'. For the various Muslim explanations of Dhu'l-Qarnain see Emilio García Gómez, ed. and transl., *Un texto drabe occidental de la leyenda de Alejandro* (Madrid, 1929), p. xlvi, note 1.

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22. xviii. 85-9. See Rodwell's translation (Everyman's Library), p. 188. Cf. the verses by Mohammed's court poet, Ḥassān ibn Thābit, translated by R. A. Nicholson, *A Literary History of the Arabs* (London, 1907), p. 18, and quoted by Anderson, p. 29, note 1.

23. See J. A. Boyle, 'Turkish and Mongol Shamanism in the Middle Ages', *Folklore* 83, pp. 177-93 (187-8).

24. The most recent and most complete translation is that by a 'Nun of Stanbrook Abbey' in Christopher Dawson (ed.), *The Mongol Mission* (London, 1955), pp. 3-84.

25. R. A. Skelton, Thomas E. Marston and George D. Painter, *The Vinland Map and the Tatar Relation* (New Haven and London, 1965), pp. 64 and 66. I have omitted the italics with which Painter indicates phrases and passages absent from Carpini's account.

26. See B. B. Szczesniak, 'Notes and Remarks on the Newly Discovered Tartar Relation and the Vinland Map', *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 86, pp. 373-6 (p. 376); Denis Sinor, 'Mongol and Turkic Words in the Latin Versions of John of Plano Carpini's Journey to the Mongols (1245-1247)', in *Mongolian Studies*, ed. L. Ligeti (Amsterdam, 1970), pp. 537-51 (544-5).

27. See Anderson, pp. 44-5. The work is referred to as *Pseudo-Methodius* because the St Methodius to whom it is always ascribed in the manuscripts was martyred in the early 4th century. 'The influence of Pseudo-Methodius', Anderson remarks, p. 49, 'was truly immense, and . . . the statement of Sackur may be mentioned, namely that during the Middle Ages the influence of *Pseudo-Methodius* was second only to that of the Canon and the church fathers. The reason for this is not far to seek: as Christendom was threatened by each new peril in the later centuries of the middle ages — the Mongol invasions and the westward advance of the Turks even to the walls of Vienna — Christendom in its direst need and darkest hour found in *Pseudo-Methodius* not only hope but even assurance of final victory over Gog and Magog and the might of Antichrist.'

28. See Anderson, p. 46; Ernst Sackur, *Sibyllinische Texte und Forschungen* (Halle, 1898), p. 72.

29. Sackur, pp. 63-4.

30. It is probably much older still, for, as Sackur remarks, p. 16, the Land of the Sun reminds one of the Babylonian Mountain of the Sunrise at the edge of the world, on to which Shamash, the Sun God, stepped out after passing through the Eastern Gate at the beginning of his journey across the sky. See L. W. King, *Babylonian Religion and Mythology* (London, 1899), pp. 32-3.

31. *Sbornik Letopisei*, I/i, transl. A. A. Khetagurov (Moscow-Leningrad, 1952), pp. 153-4.

32. See Liu Mau-tsai, *Die chinesischen Nachrichten zur Geschichte der Ost-Türken (T'u-küe)* (Wiesbaden, 1958), I, 40.

33. x. 2. See Anderson, p. 7.

34. xxxviii. 1-3.

35. See Anderson, p. 7.

36. xx. 7-8.

37. See Anderson, pp. 91-104.

38. For a translation of the Greek version of the story see Adolf Ausfeld, *Der griechische Alexanderroman* (Leipzig, 1907), pp. 83-4. There is, curiously enough, no English translation of the Greek text. On the other hand, the 5th-century Armenian version, which follows the original very closely, is now accessible to the English-speaking world. See Albert M. Wolohojian (transl.), *The Romance of Alexander the Great by Pseudo-Callisthenes* (New York and London, 1969). Unfortunately the present passage (Wolohojian, pp. 115-16) is corrupt in the Armenian text. With the motif of the she-asses Merkelbach, p. 99, compares the story in Herodotus (iii. 102-5) about the use by the Indians of a female camel to escape the pursuit of the giant, gold-digging ants.

39. See Karl Jahn (transl.), *Die Geschichte der Oguzen des Rašid ad-Dīn* (Vienna, 1969), p. 26.

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40. See L. F. Benedetto (transl.), *The Travels of Marco Polo* (London, 1931), p. 387.

41. On the Nestorians see Bertold Spuler, 'Die nestorianische Kirche', *Handbuch der Orientalistik VIII* (Leiden and Cologne, 1961), pp. 120-169.

42. On the monument at Sian see Spuler, p. 140; A. C. Moule, *Christians in China before the Year 1550* (London, 1930), pp. 27-52.

43. See Benedetto, pp. xii-xiii and 261-3.

44. The Kereit, whose territory lay in the region of the present-day Ulan Bator, are said to have been converted to Christianity at the very beginning of the eleventh century. However our only authority is the thirteenth-century Syrian chronicler Barhebraeus, who, it is suggested by Pelliot, may have interpolated the name Kereit, in which case the account, even if authentic, might apply to any Central Asian people. See René Grousset, *The Empire of the Steppes* (New Brunswick, New Jersey, 1970), p. 191 and p. 578, note 6.

45. See Pelliot, *Notes on Marco Polo*, II (Paris, 1963), p. 737.